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was concluded"; that "the change of administration" was, however, "the signal for a more vigorous development of the policy lately adopted by the United States regarding Central America"; and in a foot-note, on the authority of Mr. Schouler, that the reason why the Hise treaty was not favorably considered was that "the Taylor administration, to a certain extent, represented the reaction against the aggressive foreign policy of its predecessors."

The printer's work cannot be praised. There are many errors in it. Examples: p. 1, "pretentions"; p. 9, confusion in references to the foot-notes; p. 11, "expell"; p. 13, in the headline, "Rbitish Claims"; p. 14, "tranquility"; p. 16, "form" for "from"; p. 18, "Mosquito"; p. 23, "amunition," "detachment"; p. 27, "that" for "than"; p. 33, "intolerance"; p. 91, "vigilence"; p. 212, and elsewhere, "Columbia" for "Colombia"; p. 236, "estopp"; p. 177, the last line is found at the foot of p. 178. These are by no means all the errors that we have noticed, but it is needless to multiply instances.

P. 75 speaks of "the conclusion of Cushing's treaty in 1845" with China. The treaty was concluded in 1844. The ratifications were exchanged in 1845.

J. B. MOORE.

*The Life of William H. Seward.* By FREDERIC BANCROFT. (New York and London: Harper and Brothers. 1900. Two vols., pp. vi, 554.)

MR. WEBSTER'S three requisites for true eloquence apply to good biography as well—the man, the subject, and the occasion. The subject of this biography was worthy of the best study and commemoration; its occasion was fortunate, notwithstanding the excellent sketch of its subject which we already had in Mr. Lothrop's contribution to the American Statesmen Series, and the two very complete and exhaustive volumes of F. W. Seward, for a broader sketch than the former and a less detailed and bulky work than the latter seemed to be demanded; the man—the biographer—had previously worked on historical lines, had excellent facilities for writing this biography, and was moved in his task, as we may judge, by the spirit of industry and the purpose to produce not only an authentic, but a just and adequate portrait. Such concurrence of favoring conditions is not often surpassed.

For fully thirty years, and even longer—1838 to 1869—William H. Seward was an original force in our political life. For the first half of this period, he was the distinctive leader of a movement more critical and vital than any other in our history since 1789; and for the latter half he was in official stations which gave him large influence and control in public affairs. He was, moreover, undoubtedly a man of first-class ability, of sleepless industry, of wide-ranging activity, and of ardent ambition. No other of the many who might, with more or less propriety, be named leaders in the same movement, can be reckoned Seward's equal or rival in the art and practice of political or party leadership. Great qualities,

qualities as essential to success as Seward's, appeared in others. Chase was possibly more philosophical, Sumner more learned or widely-read; many others were more eloquent in speech; but Seward was the one leader who by nature and training was best fitted to gather and weld together into an effective organization the deep and determined forces which from 1840 to 1860 gradually brought on the crisis and struggle of civil war. Jealousies of contemporaries, passions heated in the fierce blaze of war, the spirit of "Thorough" pervading so many sincere minds at the end of the armed struggle, the current notion that Seward like Clay was only a politician too shifty and ambitious to be trusted, these and other like influences have combined since Seward's death, as they did in his lifetime, to deprive him of no small part of what we deliberately regard as his just share of honor and fame as a leader in the most dramatic period of our annals. In our judgment, the highest success of such a work as Mr. Bancroft's was probably intended to be and certainly ought to have been, lay in dispersing the mists of detraction and misconstruction which had latterly gathered about Seward's character and career, and presenting him—the man and the public figure—in true proportions and in clear light—

"both in time,  
Form of the thing, each word made true and good."

Some intimations, if not authorized statements, reached the public in advance of its publication, that the present work was, so to say, written from the inside, with access to and use of documents or sources of authentic information not open to previous writers and students. Such forecasts do not seem to have been warranted. So far as the reviewer has discovered or been informed, Mr. Bancroft has here dealt with no new documents and has presented no new facts. Under these conditions what may be required of him is a true picture, a just estimate, a readable narrative, and an effective setting of the whole in the framework of circumstances, events and times in which Seward lived and worked. Above all else, we think, his part as well as duty lay in giving the world a carefully presented and well avouched estimate of Seward's mould of character, his moral or ethical standards, his fidelity, or want of it, to principle. That he was a politician is certain; as this, was he merely crafty and self-seeking, or rather, able and sagacious? He was clearly a statesman, responsible and experienced; as this, was he capricious and visionary, or consistent and patriotic? In a word, was he only an opportunist, or was he a firm, principled statesman and political leader? It was not required of the author to set down categorical answers to these inquiries; but it was the part of a new study of Seward, holding a half-way place between a sketch and a detailed life, to put before us clearly and fairly—more clearly than had been done before—the materials of a safe and just judgment.

Seward's work and career covered two separable periods of time and were concerned with two separable lines of effort, both the periods and

lines overlapping and interlacing, but still separately visible. For ten years—1838 to 1848—his most important service was his leadership of the Whig party in New York and in the nation, a service prolonged for the Republican party until 1860. Here, if anywhere, we shall see the character of his political party service.

On these points, Mr. Bancroft's chapters V., VI., VII., while giving nothing new in substance, furnish ample materials. Here we may as well say that the first half of the author's first volume is much the most thorough part of his work. Despite a persistent, and to us unaccountable, tendency to find unworthy or purely selfish purposes in what Seward did in party politics, to read into what he wrote or said sinister meanings or designs, Seward emerges from the author's ordeal, if not unharmed, at least with cleaner hands than any ruling politician of to-day whom we could name. His intimacy with Thurlow Weed, from which we verily believe has come most of the *odium politicum* which has fallen upon Seward's head, does not appear in these volumes to deserve great reprehension, though it is visited with constant criticism from Mr. Bancroft and elsewhere. Weed was simply an old-time, managing, editorial wire-puller—no very dangerous or monstrous character in any view, especially in view of bosses of to-day who shall be nameless here.

Into the larger field into which he stepped through his entrance to the United States Senate, in 1849, Seward carried substantially the party methods he had used in New York. We here record our strong impression, founded upon what these volumes disclose, saving Mr. Bancroft's personal opinions or comments, as well as upon a brief personal contact with Seward, and a much longer and closer acquaintance with Weed, that Seward's political and party work from 1849 to 1860 was relatively clean and patriotic; by which we distinctly mean that in methods and aims he was the equal of any of his contemporaries, and far superior to the ruling party leaders of any party in our country to-day.

Mr. Bancroft's two volumes are equally divided between the two halves of Seward's career—his party leadership, and his service in official positions of national importance. The first volume closes with the conclusion of the political presidential campaign of 1860, the second volume opening with the critical winter of 1860–1861, that unfortunate and dangerous interregnum in our political system, but far more critical and dangerous in 1861 than ever before or since. Every reader of these volumes will see, as every reviewer has seen, the change of tone on Mr. Bancroft's part at this point. Hitherto he has magnified—it is not too much to say it—what he regards as Seward's faults, but with the fateful winter of 1860–1861 the tone changes, or seems to change, and Seward's rule of conduct and policy is now finely stated: "the highest statesmanship consists in getting the best results from actual conditions" (II. 7). No apparent effort is thenceforward made to find ulterior or unworthy motives, and though it would not be fair to say that Mr. Bancroft anywhere becomes Seward's excessive eulogist, we are no longer fretted by querulous or obtrusive criticism. Seward's bad foresight at this crisis

can, of course, be easily shown; and it has been shown to superfluity; but it must at least be clear now, as to many it was not then, that it was absolutely necessary to avoid an outbreak during that sad, we had almost said shameful, interregnum, to tide over the interval between the meeting of Congress in December, 1860, and the advent to his place of the new president. Seward's temper was genuinely hopeful, optimistic. It enabled or helped him to "speak smooth things" or even to "prophesy false visions" without conscious moral obliquity, and, indeed, with a purely patriotic and honest mind. The end does not sanctify the means, as an abstract proposition, but in this case the end was the highest and the means were not bad. There is no evidence of Seward's insincerity here. He saw with calm vision while others were helpless and hopeless; and he doubtless believed his most sanguine vaticinations. If it is needful to mark his fallibility of judgment here, it is not just, nor warranted by historical proof, to doubt his good faith; and surely not to question the value of his strenuous and unfailing hope. Macaulay makes one-half of the "true philosophical temperament" to consist in "much hope," and the other half in "little faith." Seward by this standard was at least half a philosopher, and if so, whether he was a whole one or not does not seem important. We lay emphasis upon this passage in his career because so many, not, however, including Mr. Bancroft, have made it the text of ridicule and depreciation.

Our knowledge of Mr. Bancroft's previous studies and pursuits had led us to expect not only a thorough treatment, but a fresh, substantial addition to our appreciation of Seward's diplomatic services. What he gives us is not without merit, in form and substance, but truth compels the verdict that it does not add to what has already been known and passed upon.

Seward's qualifications for Secretary of State, so far as previous study and interest went, were far superior in 1861, to those of any other American then living. Chapter XXX. of the second volume is valuable as a general brief view of the diplomatic situation in 1861; and it is immediately followed by four chapters covering the chief incidents of our relations with France and England during the war. These chapters, if not brilliantly or graphically done, are a good specimen of orderly and clear presentation. Here must be noted, however, one omission very difficult to account for,—the notorious M'Crackin letter and the affront which resulted in the summary retirement of Mr. Motley from Vienna,—an incident of which all the world took note, and which in the receding light of more than thirty years ago still brings a hot flush to the brow of all who loved and honored the most brilliant historical writer and the most accomplished gentleman of his generation. We are familiar with the apologies offered by thick-and-thin eulogists and personal friends of Seward. They are in vain. The act at best was done without a word of objection or protest from Seward. It goes farther than any act we know of to give credit to the bitter charge of his enemies that the old Secretary clung to his office under President Johnson at the ex-

pense of his self-respect and personal integrity. We hope Mr. Bancroft will sometime tell why a quite full life of Seward makes no allusion to this affair, though Mr. Motley's appointment is here credited to the Secretary of State (II. 153, 154).

One of the best chapters in style and substance is that on Political Prisoners (II. 254-280), a passage of our war history as indefensible as it was ineffective, an instance of Seward's excessive activity, as well as attended by more than one ugly *contretemps*, *e. g.*, the case of Ex-President Pierce, and by many quite unnecessary acts of futile injustice. Mr. Bancroft's views here are worthy of note and commendation. The system was as unwarranted in law and even good policy as were the legal tender acts in which Chase acquiesced.

These volumes present, as any sketch of a career so long, varied, active, and conspicuous must, numerous points of interest which cannot be touched here. The author offers a final or general estimate of Seward, in most of which we concur. He had previously written of his course in the Cabinet of Lincoln in the early months of the war, as we think with entire justice, that "his ambition was for the Union vastly more than for himself" (II. 149). His summation (II. 526-529) somewhat to our surprise, opens thus: "The excellence and success of Seward's career were mainly due to his *superior ideals*"—the italics ours—"and his skill in practical politics." His alleged "insincerity and egotism" are set down to his "irresistible impulse to pose and explain and appear all-wise and all-important," a characteristic which was not observed, we think, in his lifetime, but may have existed. This is followed by the unqualified dictum that "he holds the first place among all our Secretaries of State" (II. 528) whereat other and perhaps wiser judges will demur, recalling the names of at least a half-dozen previous secretaries. Here, we are reminded of Lowell's sarcasm—given by Mr. Bancroft in a note (II. 504)—"more than any minister with whose official correspondence we are acquainted, he carried the principle of paper currency into diplomacy."<sup>1</sup>

But except in some details, we agree with the final estimate of Mr. Bancroft; and we can pay him the tribute of our hearty admiration of the labor and ability which his work shows.

History, and still more, biography, is written to little purpose if it does not lead to judgments and conclusions. A reviewer may have his; and ours of Seward is carefully formed from some personal observation of the man and much more study of his career, together with a somewhat extended acquaintance with several of his most intimate and life-long associates and friends in public and private life. Judged by just standards, he appears to us a high, bright figure in the large group of those who bore foremost civil parts in the anti-slavery struggle and the ensuing war; a man of pure life and magnanimous spirit; patriotic to the core: unselfish to a degree greatly beyond any other party leader who ranked beside him; governed by a strong sense of duty; ready to stand alone

<sup>1</sup>*Political Essays*, 293.

for what he regarded as good policy or good morals; gifted with great fitness for party leadership and exercising his leadership for noble ends; a statesman in the highest sense of the word, who sought his country's honor and welfare, and largely helped to save her in the dire agony of her long struggle with slavery and what slavery caused. The shadows—foibles, weaknesses, or whatever else—on such a life and character might be much deeper than critics of Seward have ever claimed, without greatly darkening its beauty and fame.

Mr. Bancroft's handsome volumes are adorned by two fine portraits of Seward—one, we suppose, taken at the age of about 40, the other dating about 1860. The latter is familiar to all. We never look upon it without recalling Macaulay's reference to Lord Eliot's portrait of John Hampden—"the intellectual forehead, the mild penetration of the eye, and the inflexible resolution expressed by the lines of the mouth."

We cannot possibly admire Mr. Bancroft's literary style; but we can, in conclusion, award him the high praise of not making his work what a few months ago in the pages of this REVIEW<sup>1</sup> he commended in another biographer—"a zealous and successful defence and eulogy" of the subject of his biography.

DANIEL H. CHAMBERLAIN.

*Charles Sumner.* By MOORFIELD STOREY. [American Statesmen Series.] (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. 1900. Pp. iv, 466.)

MR. STOREY'S *Life of Sumner* is both a thoughtful and a sympathetic narrative of the statesman's career. Its general characterization of his mental and moral traits is accurate, pointing out his deficiencies as well as his excellencies, his faults as well as his virtues. Whilst giving Sumner full credit for his sincere and powerful advocacy of the radical principles of the anti-slavery reform, he does not conceal the fact that the orator was less successful in commanding the assent of his associates in public life than in carrying along with him the applause of the constituency which he represented. The very confidence in assertion of a high standard of right and in the deduction of present duty from it, which gives power to the platform orator, grew, in his case, into an apparent assumption of infallibility which sometimes offended his equals in the Senate. The practical duties of legislation made them impatient of arguments which often ignored the limitations which are met in applying sweeping maxims to the every-day affairs of life. The tone of the uncompromising prophet who warns and denounces, who declares the right with an assurance of certainty, chafes and irritates when debatable ground is reached. An *ipse dixit* is then a challenge and a provocation. The eloquence which had been inspiring whilst all were on common ground becomes wearisome when the common purpose has been attained, and men are urged in the name of consistency and of fundamental right to adopt measures which they instinctively feel are perilous.

<sup>1</sup> IV. 745.